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Book Reviews

Jesus and the Gospel: Christianity Justified in the Mind of Christ. By JAMES DENNEY, D.D., Professor of New Testament Language and Literature, United Free Church College, Glasgow. New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1909.

To say that this is an epoch-making or even an epoch-marking book would be to prophesy too rashly; but its appearance is at any rate a sign of the times. It deals with what is at the present hour the most living of all issues; and one may best characterize the treatment as worthy of the theme. Those who are acquainted with Dr. Denney's previous writings will not need to be told that it reveals a complete mastery of New Testament learning, and that the argument is conducted with equal skill and candor. The virile, bracing style, moreover, carries the reader irresistibly on to the end of a book which is not short, but is by no means too long for the matter it contains.

The book has a twofold purpose. Toward those who are outside the church, it is an apologetic for the validity of the Christian position; toward those who are within, it is an appeal to distinguish between the one experience which is Christian faith and the many theological concepts and systems in which the church has endeavored to give intellectual expression to that faith. The argument consists, after the modern fashion, in an appeal to the facts of experience. There are two such facts, which can neither be denied nor ignored by any truth-seeking mind—the faith in Christ which makes Christianity what it is and always has been, and the religious self-consciousness of Christ as this is portrayed in the gospels. And the question, more acutely raised than ever by recent critical thought, is: What is the relation between these facts? Which is creative of the other? This can only be determined by a scientific ascertainment of the facts, and it is to this that nine-tenths of the book is devoted.

First, Dr. Denney examines the New Testament writings (to go beyond these being superfluous) with this question in view: Is there beneath its various strata of christological thought one religious attitude toward the personal Christ? The conclusion is easily reached that in this respect "there is really a self-consistent New Testament, and a self-consistent Christian religion. There is a unity in all these early Christian books which is powerful enough to absorb and subdue their differences, and that unity is to be found in a common religious relation to Christ, in a common

sense that everything in the relations of God and man must be and is determined by him . . . and especially in a common sense of what Christians owe to him in dealing with the situation sin has created." Yet Dr. Denney does not take this part of his task lightly. This section of the book furnishes a brief but illuminating study of the New Testament christologies. The treatment of the Apocalypse is specially fresh and striking; and in his dealing with the latest phase of Pauline thought (the Epistle to the Colossians), as also with the Johannine, Dr. Denney seems to us to rise to his highest level.

The larger portion of the book is occupied with a study of the evidence borne in the Synoptics to the self-consciousness of Jesus, and here the more delicate and difficult part of the investigation lies. Dr. Denney insists, in the first place, that a true estimate of the evidence is morally conditioned, and that in three ways: by a sense, first, of the incomparable moral value of Jesus; secondly, of the vastness of the soteriological issues at stake; thirdly, of the spiritual power manifested in the historical results of the Christian faith. He effectively maintains that these conditions in no way invade the rights of strict historical inquiry; and while they are formally enunciated in connection with the evidence of the resurrection, they are operative everywhere in the estimate he forms of the self-revelation of Jesus as this is given in the gospels. Here is the crux of the problem, and Dr. Denney approaches it with a full sense of its difficulty. The whole synoptic problem is, for the purpose in hand, adequately discussed; and the critical investigations and theories by which a later coloring is detected in parts of the evangelic narrative are fully considered and, in some few points, accepted. By his detailed study of the data Dr. Denney has placed present and, we venture to say, future students of the New Testament under deep obligation. Without personally dissenting from his conclusions on any single point, one may express the opinion that, for purely apologetic purposes, his argument would have been strengthened by a few omissions. To some readers (of the kind he aims at reaching) the deduction drawn from, for instance, Christ's saying about the unpardonable sin will appear unduly strained.

But the argument is not a chain, the strength of which is measured by its weakest link. It is cumulative; and in this brief review it is impossible to convey an impression of its cumulative force. It may be safely said, however, that Dr. Denney has so presented his case, or rather has so succeeded in letting the case present itself, that it must carry conviction to those readers who are not debarred by a preconceived theory from considering it on its own merits. The conclusion is that Christianity is not an idealism, which first idealized Christ and then imagined itself based upon what was

its own idealization. The church lives by the power of the Spirit, but the Spirit does not work *in vacuo*. "When we look back from the Christian religion as the New Testament exhibits it and as it is still exhibited in the Christian church, to the historical Jesus, we see a Person who is not only equal to the place which Christian faith assigns him, but who assumes that place naturally and spontaneously as his own."

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The Child and His Religion. By GEORGE E. DAWSON. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1909. ix + 124 pp. Postpaid 82 cents.

If anyone is perplexed about the new science of religious education and seeks a brief statement of some of its main positions, Dr. Dawson's little book will answer his need. With some historical treatment of educational theory, he discusses the natural interest of the child as fundamental for all education. He then shows how this factor of interest is determinative of a perfectly natural religious development of the child, and how it must condition the methods and materials of education, including especially the Bible curriculum.

But in addition to providing a convenient introduction for the layman, these studies offer data upon some difficult questions. The subject of the natural religion of children is of the greatest importance, and if we could be sure with this writer that the child has a spontaneous interest in the idea of ultimate causality and of immortality, we should be on firm ground at a very critical point. Does a child ask, apart from adult suggestion, Who made the sun? And, if he does, what does he mean by it, and what does the answer in terms of deity mean to him?

The study of children's interest in the Bible has been based on a large collection of data. It would be more valuable and convincing if we could be quite sure that the children had really had a proper opportunity of choice between the different parts of the Bible. In other words, the study may reveal quite as much regarding inadequate presentation of the Bible as regarding natural interests of youth. The graph shows a culmination of boys' interest in the historical books at the eleventh year, markedly declining from that point. If the fascinating biography of the Old Testament were presented apart from doctrinal deductions, the returns might be different. At least two years later would seem to be the culmination. The very slight interest in prophecy culminating in boys at fourteen and disappearing at fifteen, although the study includes the twentieth year, would seem to